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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000978

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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LONDON FOR CGURNEY
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SUBJECT: NEPAL'S POLITICAL PARTIES' ATTEMPT TO RE-OPEN
PARLIAMENT TURNS VIOLENT

REF: KATHMANDU 961

1. (U) On May 28, Nepal's political parties marched on the Parliament House in an attempt to reconvene the dissolved House of Representatives for two days of meetings. Each of the five parties participating in the day's protest held seats prior to Parliament's dissolution in 2002, including the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML), People's Front Nepal (PFN), Nepal Workers and Peasant's Party (NWPP), and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP). Support for the parties' efforts was not universal. The palace-aligned Rastriya Pajatantra Party (RPP) General Secretary, Kamal Thapa, stated that his party would not participate in the march, preferring to remain neutral. Former Speaker of Parliament Tara Nath Ranabhat and former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba also refused to participate, explaining that this would set a bad precedent for future parliaments and is unconstitutional.

2. (U) Embassy sources report that the leaders of the political parties, including former Prime Ministers G.P. Koirala (NC) and Mahdavi Nepal (UML), headed the procession to the Parliament House (which is collocated with the Prime Minister's office and most government offices in a walled complex) but were prevented from entering by security personnel. The parties then activated their alternate plan to open their session in the Royal Nepal Academy, roughly 2 kilometers north of Parliament. During the travel to the alternate site, the party cadres reportedly became violent, throwing rocks and bricks at passing vehicles. The police used baton charges and tear gas to disperse the protesters. The Embassy has received no reports of American Citizens caught in this latest protest; however, the RSO has sent a Security Notice through the warden system advising American Citizens to avoid the area.

3. (SBU) Comment: The political parties' demonstration today is a continuation of their joint protest (reftel) against the King's appointment of an interim government in October 2002. Today's particular aim was to reestablish a constitutional body that could prompt a showdown with the King. The protest's descent into violence is another demonstration of the parties' inability to articulate a constructive role for themselves in Nepal's political landscape. The violence also mars the fiftieth anniversary celebrations marking Sir Edmund Hillary's and Tenzing Norgay's ascent of Everest.
BOGGS